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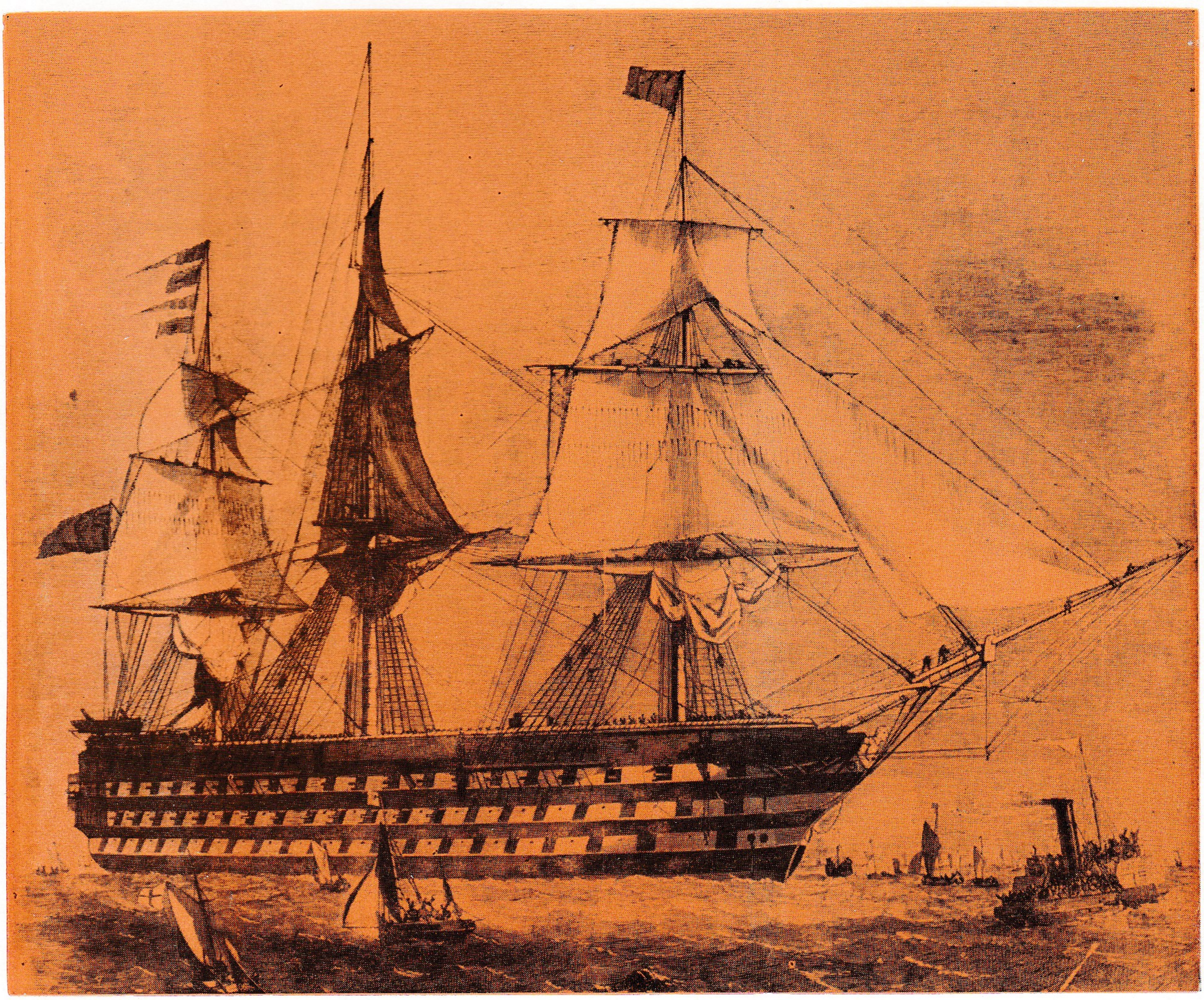

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Cover illustration: 'The Duke of Wellington', flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, weighing anchor.

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PORTSMOUTH AND THE CRIMEAN WAR

Margaret J. Hoad, MA and Professor A. Temple Patterson

The Crimean War, though in modern retrospect it has been condemned as needless, bloody and barren of results, was welcomed at the time by most Portsmuthians with the same enthusiasm as by the majority of their fellow-countrymen. Britain had not been involved in a European war for nearly forty years, and the country could in consequence almost be described as spoiling for a fight. True, the ancient enmity with France had just been temporarily allayed, but this was due to a common hostility to Russia which now blossomed into a brief alliance of the two former enemies against her, based though this was on differing motives and interests. The Russian bear had become the bogey of Britons and the symbol that provoked their belligerent passions. Liberals detested and denounced the Tsar's autocracy as a cruel despotism, while patriots grew more and more alarmed at Russia's expansion through central Asia towards the frontiers of India and her ambitions in the Balkans and the Middle East. Her latest quarrel here with Turkey was seen as blatant aggression, and her destruction of the Turkish fleet in the one-sided naval battle of Sinope in 1853 as a brutal massacre.

Hence as events marched, or rather drifted, towards war in the opening weeks of 1854 the townsfolk watched the preparations for it with an approving interest that was nevertheless mixed with the fears of those many families of sailors and soldiers, naturally more numerous than in most other places, for whom it must mean the departure of their menfolk to danger and perhaps death. A powerful, or at least outwardly powerful, fleet was being fitted out for service in the Baltic, and the town's newspaper, the *Hampshire Telegraph*, was full of notices of ships arriving, or being prepared or built in the Dockyard. The command was correctly expected to be given to Sir Charles Napier, the most popular seaman of the day, who had once before distinguished himself in naval operations in alliance with the Turks – though that had been fourteen years earlier and only against the Egyptians – and before that again in Portuguese service[1] against that country's rebel reactionaries. Few as yet realised, outside the Service at least, that in spite of his bluff and blustering braggadacio Sir Charles was long past his best and was in fact not far from degenerating into an aged fuddy-duddy and almost a figure of fun with his short and tubby build and shuffling gait. In a letter to Queen Victoria dated 9 February 1854 Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, assessed him in these terms:

> 'Sir Charles Napier is an excellent seaman and combines boldness with discretion . . . His appointment will give confidence both to officers and men . . . If he has the faults of his family, he is not without their virtues; courage, genius, love of country . . . On shore he has given just cause of complaint; but at sea and in command he is a different person.'

Even within the Navy, fewer still, perhaps, can have appreciated the limitations of the ill-assorted collection of old sail-of-the-line, transitional full-rigged battleships with auxiliary screws, and small paddle-steamers that was now being got together. For the revolution in naval armaments of which the chief features were to be the change from sail to steam and the substitution of iron hulls for wooden walls was only just getting under way, and if anything it was France rather than Britain which at present was leading it. Nor was the best being made of the materials available, at least if an army officer (admittedly not likely to be the most knowledgeable and unbiassed of critics), is to be believed. This officer, a Captain J. A. Rolls who was at Portsmouth in July 1853, wrote at the time:

> 'Pretty job with the *Caesar* at Pembroke; they say she has broken her back. The *Duke of Wellington* nearly shared the same fate. What abominable carelessness!
>
> The *Wellington* has broken her screw. The *Agamemnon* won't steer and was obliged to come into dock to have a false keel put on. There is one new ship never been out turned into a coal hulk because she won't do anything. There is the *Termagant* up the harbour that won't sail or steam or steer or anything. What a mess they make of it! Any private yard would soon lose their reputation.'

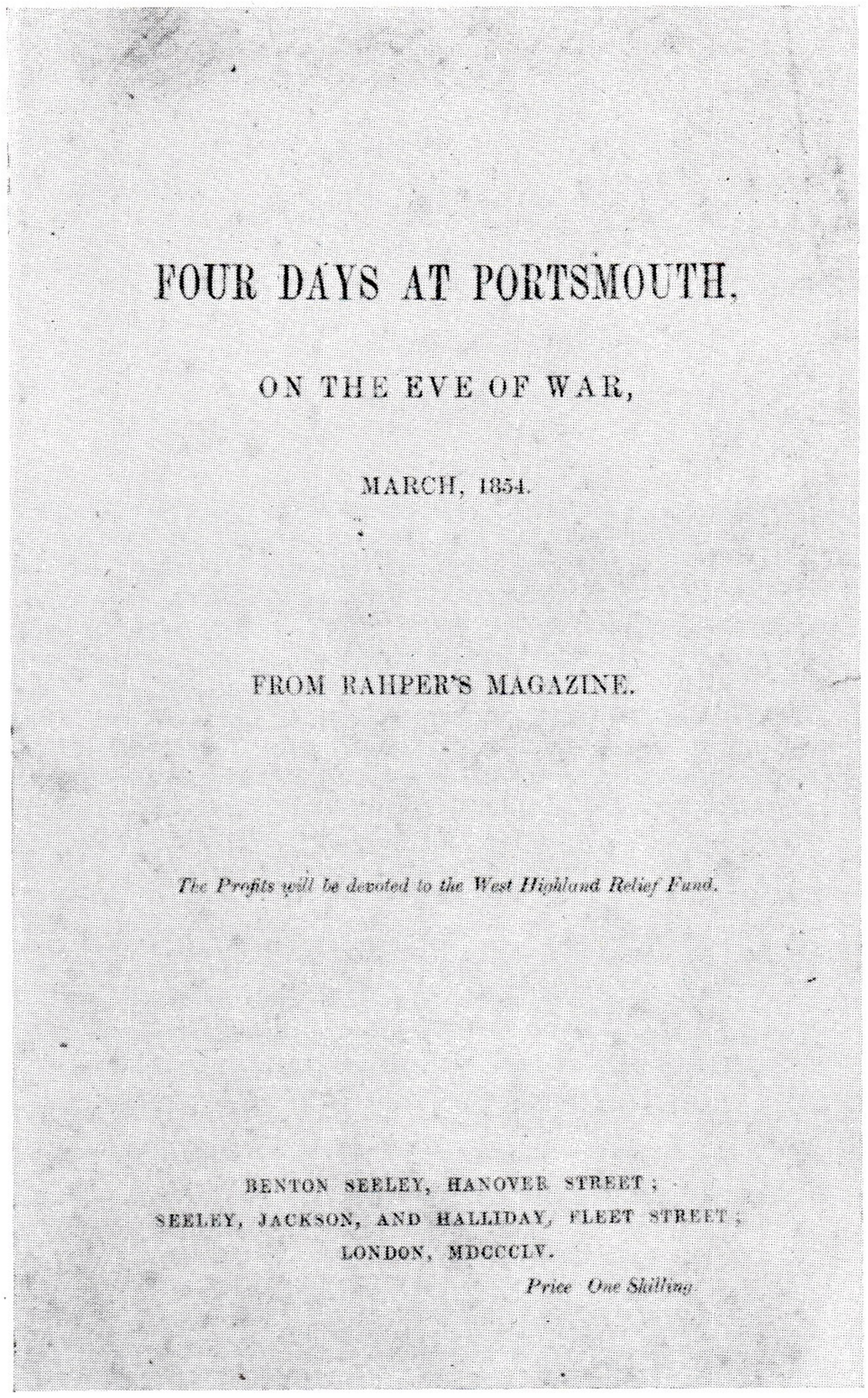
By February 1854, however, parties of newly-raised seamen were arriving daily for the ships that were fitting out, and after their arrival were being drilled in the use of small arms and exercised in reefing and furling sails, seamanship and gunnery. Orders had been received for calling out half the coastguards to serve in the Navy, and all Greenwich out-pensioners under sixty had been summoned to report at the pension office for inspection to ascertain their fitness to replace them, though in the event some who were found fit for service were allowed to volunteer for seagoing ships. About 130 seamen riggers in the Dockyard, too, were called up for active service. All officers' leave was stopped, and a new 91-gun ship, the *Princess Royal*, which had been launched in the previous autumn and was now completed for sea, steamed out of the harbour on

[1] In flat disregard of the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819, though he served under the name of Captain Carlos de Ponza.

15 February to take up her station at Spithead as a unit of the assembling Baltic Fleet. Of 400 h.p. engines, her mean average speed during six runs over the measured mile had been 11·031 knots; but at her first trial on the 15th with her masts, guns and all other heavy weights on board, after running in fine style to Osborne and back to the Nab and then starting back again, she came to a sudden standstill and signalled that her engines were disabled and she needed assistance. After a few minutes, however, the breakdown proved trifling and she cancelled her signal, got up steam again and came up to Spithead. This performance nevertheless underlined the limitations from which steam propulsion in the Navy still suffered and does something to bear out Captain Rolls's strictures.

At the beginning of March it was the Army's turn to take the limelight, when the second battalion of the Rifle Brigade, which had been in garrison in the town, left for what was about to become the scene of war. After an inspection by Major-General James Simpson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Portsmouth and G.O.C. of the South-Western District, 27 officers, 80 n.c.o.'s and 850 men marched from the Barrack Yard, two companies to go by rail to Southampton for embarkation there and the other six to the Dockyard, where they immediately went on board the war-steamer *Vulcan*. In the ranks of these there marched a private's wife who, not having been included in the very limited number of those allowed to accompany the troops, had put on uniform and placed herself beside her husband. Inevitably detected almost at once, she was nevertheless given permission to go out, provided that she resumed female garb. A less happy outcome of another imminent separation, however, was the suicide of a colour-sergeant aged 32 with fifteen years' service in the battalion, who cut his throat through grief at having to leave his wife and child behind, though what were described as 'pecuniary embarrassments with his corps' proved to have been contributory causes of his act. On the same day the second battalion of the Scots Fusilier Guards (as the Scots Guards were then called), who were reckoned the crack regiment in the Service and were soon to justify that reputation at the battle of the Alma, embarked on board the steam transport *Simoom*, a vessel of 2000 tons originally intended as a steam frigate but declared unsuitable. Their march through London to entrain having been much delayed by enthusiastic crowds, they were two hours late in arriving at Portsmouth, where both they and the

The Grand Naval Review – yachts taking out passengers to view the fleet (*sketched from Southsea common*).



The anonymous lady diarist's account of the great review of the Baltic Fleet, 1854.

Rifle Brigade before them had great difficulty in forcing their way through the press of people at the Dockyard gates who crowded round them and even forced their way into the ranks to seize them by the hand and wish them God-speed.

A somewhat less facile and more substantial expression of gratitude and of sympathy with the wives and children left behind, at least on the part of a limited number of the inhabitants, eventually resulted from a public meeting called in the same week by the Mayor to consider means of alleviating the condition of the families of the 'other ranks', many of whom would otherwise have no resort but poor relief. Perhaps because it met at the inconvenient hour of 2 p.m., it was not very largely attended, but after it had resolved that a local subscription would not in itself be adequate a committee was set up to endeavour to put pressure on the Government to take action in the matter. Similar meetings were held elsewhere and similar resolutions passed, but it was not till the autumn had brought the costly victory of the Alma and the first news of the state of the sick and wounded in the hands of an inefficient medical service that the Ministry took the lead in the formation of a Patriotic Fund to provide for the support of widows and orphans. A local committee was immediately formed, under whose aegis Portsmouth had in the next three weeks subscribed nearly £1500 and Gosport £280.

The great moment, however, was the departure of the first division of the Baltic Fleet on Saturday 11 March, after being reviewed by Queen Victoria. For days beforehand people poured into the town by excursion trains from London, Brighton and elsewhere, by paddle-steamers and sailing vessels from Southampton (from which even P. and O. and Royal Mail liners came), Cowes and all along the south coast, as well as by other means of transport. By Thursday not a bed was to be had at any of the hotels, and by Friday evening all the lodging-houses and even the stables were full. A journal of this exciting week was published as a pamphlet in 1855 by Benton Seeley of London.[1] The authoress is not named, but as the words 'by Miss Bird' appear very faintly in pencil on the cover this may have been her name. To conceal her identity further, the names of all officers whom she mentions and those of their ships had been deleted. All that was revealed was that she arrived in Portsmouth on the evening of Monday 6 March, and stayed at the house, 'fronting Spithead', of a high-ranking naval officer.

She began her account next day thus:

'Early this morning I was startled by the thunder of a cannon, and at nine the greater part of the sixteen sail in front of the window began target practice and the continued booming of the guns went on without cessation, but for the dinner hour, till four o'clock. At eleven two friends and I drove to a most horrible kind of parade or wharf, fronting the harbour and steamboat pier, called the Hard.[2] Nearly all the houses [which are] not taverns with vulgar names are pawnbrokers' or slop-shops. The windows of most were full of large placards offering unheard-of advantages even beyond death to A.B.'s patriotic enough to serve their Queen and country in various ships with most belligerent names. Sundry flags waved from the upper windows of most of these taverns showing the whereabouts of a subaltern officer lying in wait to "volunteer" men.

'There was a noisy crowd of most discordant component parts, naval captains and lieutenants with swords and epaulettes and little naval cadets with gold-banded caps looking forward to prize-money and "Peerages or Westminster Abbey". There were files of the Artillery, and Highlanders with kilts and waving plumes, and real

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[1] This pamphlet was described as an excerpt from *Rahper's Magazine*, but there was no periodical of this name, which is an obvious parody of *Harper's* – i.e. Harper's *New Monthly Magazine*.

[2] By the present Harbour Station.

men-of-war's men by hundreds looking gloomy and overworked, and knowing old salts with quids of tobacco in their cheeks, wishing the "Hemperer of Rooshee" on the point of their cutlasses. There were crowds of people besieging the Dockyard gates, with difficulty kept back by the sentries on guard, and hundreds of women, some clean and sorrowful-looking, others noisy and slatternly. All who could pay the enormous charges of the watermen were going or returning from Spithead; and at the stairs boats were thumping, women crying and boatmen cursing and swearing louder than all. Above the Babel of this Pandemonium thundered the cannon from the fleet, reminding us that we are on the eve of a war of which no human foresight can predict the close.'

It should be borne in mind that the last great struggle in which the country had been engaged, and of which people like the diarist would be thinking, that against revolutionary and Napoleonic France, had lasted for nearly a quarter of a century with only two brief breaks.

'We went down the landing-stairs [she continued] between a double row of miserable-looking handcuffed deserters, and after a certain amount of difficulty went off in the *Victory*'s boat for that celebrated flagship,[1] closely followed by the deserters under an escort of marines. Captain ——— [John C. D. Hay] received us on the maindeck and took us over the ship, which I will not describe, for our new line-of-battleships make her look a pigmy, huge as she is . . . We saw the court-martial room and were told that frequently during the tedious process of a court-martial the captains would slily fill each other's cocked hats with shavings of paper which descend in showers when the hats are put on during the passing of sentences . . . We went down to the maindeck, the middle, the lower and the orlop deck or cockpit, where the midshipmen spend some years of their lives and to which the wounded are brought down during action . . . Returning to the maindeck, we found the men just going to dinner, and one produced a basin of soup which Captain ——— [Hay] was very glad to taste by deputy. It was thick and well-flavoured. After lunch we drove again down the crowded Hard to Captain ———, where our cicerone, Lieutenant ———[2] of the steam-frigate V———[3] soon arrived, a fine tall young man with a pleasant sailor-like frankness of manner.'

Lieutenant ——— took the party over the Dockyard, of which the diarist wrote:

'One sees such a turmoil outside the gates and reads so constantly of the activity in the dockyards that I was quite surprised with the apparent paucity of workmen; and even in the factories the men looked as unconcerned and the hammers fell as regularly as though a European conflagration were not just at hand.

'Our first visit was to the block machinery, where everything is done by steam. First trunks of trees are sawn into the required lengths by a circular saw; next the apertures for the sheaves are cut into them by an accurately adjusted bore; then twelve or fourteen of these blocks are placed upon a wheel which of itself so alters their position as to present every part of their surfaces in turn to the action of a circular blade of astonishing sharpness which performs the almost incredible number of from 700 to 900 revolutions in a minute. In the upper room we saw a still more delicate process, the making of the sheaves. They are made of lignum vitae, nearly as hard as iron wood, and are cut, bored, grooved, planed and polished by the most exquisitely adjusted machinery. The artisans were extremely intelligent and obliging, explaining the whole process as soon as they saw we were really interested . . . We then proceeded to the steam factory, where all interesting processes were going on, from the piercing of a boiler plate to the making of a crank for the engine of a three-decker . . . Captain ——— [Claud H. M. Buckle] had repeatedly asked us to visit his frigate, which we had positively declined; but finding it lying in the steam-basin, we went on board. It was in a state of great disorder, artificers being at work day and night. Lieutenant ——— took us from all this dirt and confusion into Captain [Buckle's] cabin, which looked like a very elegant boudoir, books, china and articles of vertu scattered about on tables. The library was admirably selected. Lieutenant ——— told us that all the furniture and partitions could be cleared away for action in five minutes. When we got on deck, to our great dismay we found Captain [Buckle], who seemed really annoyed at us for having refused to visit his beautiful ship when in order and then stealing into it to-day when everything was in confusion. Our next visit was to the casting room, floored to the depth of several inches with something resembling soot. The men were making moulds for every conceivable thing in cast-iron, and gave information very politely. The metal not being ready for casting, we went on to a huge vaulted building used as a forge, full of machinery, furnaces and hot half-clothed men rushing about with masses of hot iron in a most reckless manner . . .

'We then proceeded to the docks and building yards, and saw the royal yacht,[4] a gaudy ill-designed paddle-steamer, and the laying the keel of a 50-gun frigate. Finding ourselves unimpeded, we went up a long ladder and got in at a porthole of a magnificent line-of-battleship, the *Royal Frederic*, quite completed, ready for launching . . . Our next move was to the shears where the unlucky *Caesar* is being fitted out with the most astonishing rapidity. The beauty of these screw ships is that they are rigged like sailing vessels, and when not under steam their telescope funnels fold up out of sight . . . We returned to Captain ———'s, only Lieutenant ———'s uniform carrying us safely through the crowd. He asked a policeman if we could see a victualling-yard to-morrow, to which he replied: "Oh yes, Sir, they work night and day by *rallies*" '

'WEDNESDAY – The wind changed in the night, and at six o'clock I was awoke by a sound as of the house tumbling about my ears. I was startled, but when I collected my senses and found everything stationary it occurred to me that it was the morning gun from the flag-

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[1] Which in those days was lying in the harbour.
[2] The *Valorous* had three lieutenants: J. Edye, E. J. Lawson and C. B. C. Dent.
[3] Presumably the *Valorous*.
[4] The *Fairy*, serving temporarily as the royal yacht (to which she had previously been tender) during the construction of a new *Victoria and Albert*, which was launched from Pembroke Dockyard in January 1855.

ship. Precisely at nine a cannonade began from all the fleet at Spithead, so loud that we could not hear each other speak at breakfast, and doors and windows rattled . . . Added to the deep heavy booming of the cannon there was the continual popping of musketry from two regiments practising target and platoon firing on the Common. At eleven Lieut. ———, who does submit to be victimised in the most praiseworthy manner, escorted us through the intricate lines, fortifications and drawbridges of Portsmouth to the Sallyport where the *Odin*'s boat was to meet us; not finding the boat there, we went on to the Point, but still no Captain ——— [F. Scott], and even Lieut. ——— could scarcely elbow a retreat for us through the crowds of crying women, half-tipsy sailors, and grasping watermen clamorous to take us to Spithead. At last, however, we got off [and crossed the harbour to Gosport].

'The Royal Clarence Yard is a very handsome range of buildings, and Her Majesty's private railroad runs upon the pier. The Superintendent and Storekeeper have houses in this yard . . .

'A policeman, the most intelligent of his race, took us over the biscuit factory, where all the operations are performed by steam. You put in corn at one end and at the other it comes out biscuit. In the first room the wheat is winnowed and cleaned by ceaselessly revolving cylinders; in another 30 pairs of millstones grind it; and by strings of buckets moved by steam this meal is carried into an upper room into cylindrical sieves, which rapidly revolving throw the flour outside, while the bran falls into a proper receptacle. This flour undergoes another process, which was not visible, and then passes into a lower room into long narrow wooden troughs eight inches deep, with a succession of revolving fans which continually push the flour into dozens of little steel buckets ever ascending. We then went into a long room swarming with pale-faced bakers. Steam here mixes the dough, rolls it flat, cuts it into squares, stamps it, and when the men have put it into the ovens steam carries back the trays to the other end of the room. For some time past this establishment has been working night and day, turning out 22,000 lbs. of biscuit per diem. As our boat had gone home to be repaired, we cajoled the policeman into letting us wait in the royal waiting-room on the pier. We looked into everything, but the only thing of real interest was a blotting-book in which four of the royal children had scrawled their names, and on another page some rough pencil diagrams showed that someone had been teaching them the doctrine of centrifugal force . . .'

Next day the diarist visited the Sailors' Home[1] in Queen Street, and in the evening was brought into contact with 'some of the miseries of war', at least from the officers' standpoint, by witnessing the griefs of parting.

> 'An hour before dinner the first lieutenant of the ——— came in great haste to look for Lieut. ———[2], saying he must be on board by eight, as the ——— was to sail at daybreak. This poor lieutenant had only been married two days, after an engagement of three years, and was telegraphed for to Portsmouth this afternoon. Soon after, Captain ——— came on shore to take leave of his wife and sisters. Presently Miss ——— came to say that her brother . . . was ordered to lead the Fleet in a surveying vessel[3] and that he was about to take leave of his devoted wife. These unexpected events naturally threw a gloom over our party . . . As we went down to dinner two naval cadets arrived; one looked about 14, the other about 12, little fairhaired boys to whom one felt inclined to say 'Does your mother know you're out?' Poor children, they might never know a mother's blessing again. I now realize the stern realities of war; the fictitious glitter with which I had invested it is gone . . . All Portsmouth was in a state of distraction with hasty leave-taking and – still more important – the hurrying home of clothes from the wash. Napier has received orders, and it is rumoured the Fleet is first to attack Aland, defended by batteries mounting a thousand guns. All the officers seem gloomy and to expect a war of extermination particularly fatal to themselves. Neither Lieut. ——— nor ourselves trusted ourselves to speak, so true is the remark "that a day's intercourse in these stirring times makes people more intimate than years of ordinary acquaintanceship" '.

On Friday the Queen was due to come down and cross to Osborne, prior to reviewing the Fleet next day, and

> 'as early as eight o'clock the Common was covered with people . . . and boats innumerable were going out to Spithead. But alas for those who came to see, and for the watermen who wished to fleece the seers, the gale was so strong that none but the largest boats could go out. My hosts never go where saluting is probable, but Mr. ———, Miss ——— and I, after calmly weighing circumstances decided that if the boat could go we would brave seasickness and a wetting to the skin, to launch on board the "*Jinny Dacca*"[4]. At 11 we went forth prepared for the worst, but not for being nearly blown away and being obliged to cling to gates and railings. We went first to Victoria Pier, the corridor of which was crowded with cross-looking gentlemen and woebegone ladies with sand in their eyes and their bonnets blown off. Not finding anything there, we went on to the Sallyport, where the *Odin*'s boat was tossing about on large waves unable to make the stairs, and Captain ——— [Scott] said we should not risk our lives in an open boat, but very kindly sent a note to the *Victory* and obtained permission for us to go on board. It was in a perfect storm of wind and rain that we went to the Dockyard.
>
> 'The gates were kept strictly closed against a mob who were besieging them, and it was not till we had called several times through the keyhole "*Odin*'s boat" that our "Open Sesame" produced any effect upon the sentry, who at length opened the door just widely enough to admit one at a time, to the great indignation of the less fortunate crowd, some individuals of which called out "Fair play's a jewel!" The naval cadet who steered the boat contrived to run us against some watermen's wherries who, being deprived of their harvest, saluted us with volleys of oaths and curses. On the poop of the *Victory*

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[1] Opened in 1851. It received the Queen's patronage in 1855 and became known as the Royal Sailors' Home.
[2] Evidently not the party's cicerone.
[3] Probably the *Lightning*.
[4] The *St. Jean d'Acre* (101 guns).

were Captain Hay and Captain Boyle in full uniform and a triple rank of marines; but the rain was so heavy that I thought Her Majesty . . . would receive a damp welcome from under cotton umbrellas. Signals to the Fleet were going on the whole time, and one telegraphic message giving a practical idea of the horrors of war came down: "Double the quantity of chloroform for each ship" '.

At noon the *Victory's* guns announced the imminence of the royal train's arrival, whereupon the signal to dress ship was made from the *St. Jean d'Acre*, which was flying Napier's flag, though he himself had not yet arrived in the port. At 12.7 the train, carrying the Queen, Prince Albert and their children, steamed in to the Clarence Yard, whereat – according to the diarist at least – 'the rain ceased and the clouds cleared away'. Her Majesty was received by Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Cochrane, who was the Port Admiral, General Simpson, Rear-Admiral Martin the Admiral Superintendent of the Dockyard, and a guard of honour of the 42nd Highlanders (Black Watch), who were then in garrison but awaiting transport overseas. She then went on board the *Fairy*, the temporary royal yacht, which had been waiting with steam up alongside the Clarence Yard jetty and which immediately steamed down the harbour past the *Victory*, *Neptune* (120) and other ships lying there, whose crews manned the yards and cheered her. According to the diarist, 'Her Majesty looked very uncomfortable, making continual efforts to prevent her cloak being blown over her head'. As the yacht neared the harbour mouth the garrison fired a royal salute from the Platform Battery, and when she emerged into the sight of the ships at Spithead these followed suit with 21 guns each, after which their crews also manned yards and cheered her as she passed through their lines on her way to Cowes and Osborne.

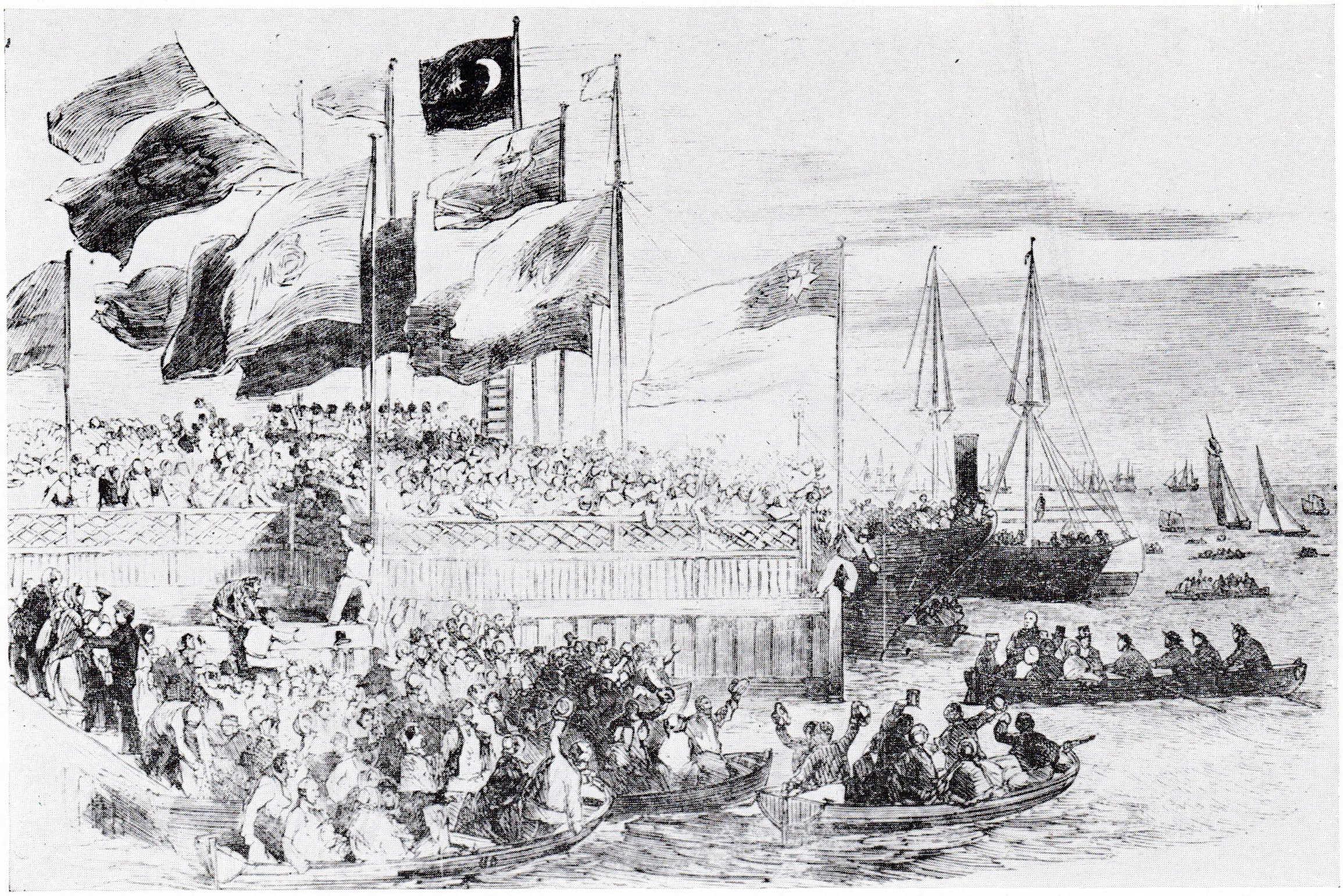
'In the evening [continued the diarist] my cousin Lieutenant ———, Lady and Miss ———, Admiral ——— and the Hon. ——— spent the evening with us. The conversation was principally on the coming struggle, and many were the gloomy anticipations expressed by the officers with regard to a war which may "track with terror twenty rolling years". Admiral ——— said it was definitely settled that the Fleet would sail to-morrow, if Napier could be found, about which many doubts were expressed . . . An incessant running of cabs went on through the night. Portsmouth is all astir, the price of provisions nearly doubled – the most comfortless room charged a guinea a night for, and those unfortunate people who have not obtained rooms previously may be seen on the pavements in front of the hotels keeping disconsolate watch over carpet-bags and portmanteaux'.

In the matter of sleep, though not of course in that of accommodation, she was little better off, for she 'could not sleep at all, so incessant was the race of vehicles and the tramp of foot passengers'.

On Saturday preparations for the review began early, and all Portsmouth and its visitors were abroad and stirring to see them, while trains and steamers continued to pour in their thousands. Soon after eight the *Neptune*, which had been in the harbour for more than twenty years but was nevertheless to lead the second division of the Baltic Fleet as the flagship of Rear-Admiral Corry, was towed out to Spithead by two tugs. Vast crowds had assembled on the ramparts to see her pass with her band playing, and before nine o'clock strings of vehicles of all descriptions and crowds of pedestrians began to converge on the beach and esplanade.

'As we walked down into Portsmouth [continued our anonymous lady diarist] confiding in the possession of ten and sixpenny tickets, I was much amused to see the determined manner in which numerous family parties of cockney excursionists took up their positions for the day, fortified by huge baskets containing eatables and porter. Half Portsmouth seemed to be hurrying to Southsea and the other half to the redoubts, while half the world was rushing distractedly to the Victoria Pier. In High Street we met the Corporation of Portsmouth in scarlet robes, trimmed with fur, returning from the embarkation of Napier'.

The delay in the Commander-in-Chief's arrival had in fact been due to his having been the guest of honour at a farewell banquet given him by the Reform Club, to which his Liberal principles made him *persona grata*. Unfortunately at this function the wines had also been very liberal, with the result that there had been a good deal of ill-timed boasting, and Napier in particular had distinguished himself – or rather, had made a fool of himself – by promising that within a month of entering the Baltic he would be either in Kronstadt (the great fortress which guarded the then Russian capital of St. Petersburg) or in Heaven. He had, however, arrived at the George Hotel in Portsmouth on Friday afternoon, gone to his home at Merchiston Hall near Horndean, and then returned to the George to sleep, since the Town Council was to present him with an address at eleven o'clock in the morning. In reply to this he made what the diarist described as 'a very sensible speech, quite different in tone from the one launched upon the Reform Club', declaring that he would do his duty to the best of his ability but modestly warning his hearers not to expect too much. It is probable that he had realised (or it may have been pointed out to him) that his unfortunate Reform Club gasconade had damaged what would now be called his image. It is true that Nelson



Sir Charles Napier leaving Portsmouth.

was given to such gasconading even when otherwise quite sober, but Napier was no Nelson, as he was to demonstrate all too soon.

His departure, however, was attended by an enthusiasm little less than had marked Nelson's before Trafalgar. Cheering crowds accompanied him to the Victoria Pier, where it was only with difficulty that he could make his way through them to board the tender *Sprightly*, which according to *The Times* report of 13 March

> 'had been appointed to take him on board his flagship. But she could neither get alongside the pier herself nor could her boats for some time approach it. An obstinate excursion steamer . . . would stick in the way, and there were dozens of smaller craft that would intrude, despite all orders to the contrary. At length, however, he got safely off and the *Sprightly*, after nearly crushing a pilot-boat filled with sailors' wives and children that lay in the way, put him on board the *Duke of Wellington*.'

To this magnificent sail-and-screw battleship of 131 guns and carrying 1100 men, the largest vessel in the Fleet, his flag had been shifted from the *St. Jean d'Acre* earlier in the morning.

The diarist's embarkation from the Victoria Pier was even more difficult than Napier's:

> 'We found the covered entrance to the Pier choked up with persons whom I must by courtesy designate as gentlemen, who were attempting to force the ticket-barrier, which a distracted-looking female was attempting to close. Ladies unceremoniously taken by the shoulders were pushed out of the way or poked by gigantic elbows, bonnets and hats were knocked off, and still the crowd pressed on. At last the barrier was forced, the woman fainted, policemen stormed, and the living tide rolled on to the Pier, already to all appearances as full as it could hold. A stage had been erected over the stairs and was already straining under its living freight, and the stairs themselves were crowded with persons waiting to make a rush into the first steamer. The crowd still increased and increased, till the lighter persons were carried off their feet, and when the first steamer neared the Pier the crush and excitement were awful. It reached the stairs, the crowd on the Pier pressed on the occupants of the stairs, who, I could see through the planks, were wedged as in a second Black Hole, the foremost were pushed into the water, an old gentleman was knocked down, two ladies fainted where no assistance could be rendered, some shrieked and called piteously for aid, gentlemen clenched their fists and bullied and swore, while a man belonging to the steamboat company was calling out in a stentorian voice "Ladies and gentlemen go on board, take it easy, take care of your purses" . . .'

After the diarist and her party had remained wedged in on the pier for an hour, a small steamer belonging to the Customs drew near, and taking a leap which in soberer moments they would not have attempted, they got safely on board her.

> 'As soon as a plank had been laid [from her] to the Pier a general rush took place and some gentlemen succeeded in getting in, but our commander promptly gave the order "Pitch the gangway board over", which saved us from the discomfort of a crush but left several hundred people wedged together on the Pier hardly able to see anything of the Fleet and chewing with imbecile rage the bitter cud of disappointed expectation. We steamed rapidly out to Spithead, passing on our way the *Ville de Paris* railroad steamer with a thousand people on board, about three hundred being able to see. We steamed once round the whole Fleet and then there being no sign of the arrival of

Women leaving 'The Hard', Portsea, for the Baltic Fleet.

the Queen, we went round each ship from the steam sloop *Bulldog* to the gigantic three-deckers *Neptune*, *Duke of Wellington* and *Royal George* . . . While we were waiting in the hope of still seeing Her Majesty Mr. ——— overheard the following colloquy in Spanish between two Spanish gentlemen. 1st. "What think you of the manners of the English?" 2nd. "Gentlemen or ladies?" 1st. "Both". 2nd. "The gentlemen atrocious, the ladies worse". The clock struck one, and at the same moment the *Fairy* with the royal standard at the main was seen in the distance . . . Our Captain asked if the few ladies on board would object to the close proximity to the guns during a salute, and all being of the heroic turn he steered us close under the guns of the *Duke*, the *St. Jean d'Acre* being on the other side, and ordered the passengers to kneel down on deck. The *Amphion* frigate fired the first gun and the saluting was quickly taken up by the whole Fleet. I think it must have given a good idea of a battle to lie stationary exposed to the cross-fire of two ships of the line. At the thunder of the first 68-pounder fired across us my first impulse was to hide; my next, which I put into practice, was to put my head over the bulwarks and see the fun. We were speedily enveloped in the thick clouds of sulphurous smoke, through which nothing was visible but the rapid flashes of flame vomited forth by the cannon nearly close enough to singe us . . . When the smoke cleared away it revealed the *Fairy* steaming gracefully up to the Fleet, which in a few minutes she reached and her speed was slackened so as to pass slowly by each ship'.

The Queen, who wore a dark silk dress with a sable muff and victorine and a blue veil, and carried a parasol, had been expected to come on board the flagship, and the ladders and part of the decks had been covered with scarlet cloth for her reception; but either from timidity or possibly from delicacy she did not do so. Instead the *Fairy* passed slowly down the line of ships, each with its rigging manned, its marines drawn up on the main and quarter decks, and its band playing the national anthem as she passed, after which deafening cheers rolled out over the water. Arrived at the head of the line, she hove to and made signal for the admirals and captains to repair on board. Napier with Rear-Admirals Chads (his second-in-command), Corry and Plumridge, and all his captains, duly did so and in a brief ceremony they were presented to the Queen by Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Then, returning to the *Duke of Wellington*, Napier signalled to the Fleet to get under way under sail, and the ships weighed in succession – the *Tribune* (39), *St. Jean d'Acre*, *Impérieuse* (51), *Amphion* (34), *Blenheim* (60), *Princess Royal* (91), *Edinburgh* and *Ajax* (both 58's), *Arrogant* (47), *Hogue* (60), the paddle-ships *Leopard*, *Valorous* and *Dragon*, and the *Royal George* (120). Last of all the signal was made for the flagship to weigh and make sail, and Napier's daughters, who had accompanied their father out to his flagship together with Admiral Berkeley and Sir Baldwin Walker, the Surveyor of the Navy, returned on board the *Sprightly*, which kept the flagship company for a time. By now the *Fairy* had shot ahead and was leading the Fleet out to sea with the Queen standing on deck. When the leading ships were off St. Helen's, however, the yacht shortened sail and then put about to take Her Majesty back to Osborne, cheered again

by each ship as she passed it. By four o'clock the Fleet was out of sight to the eastward.

Since the fine weather which it was loyally asserted the Queen had brought with her had continued all that Saturday, an immense number of craft of all kinds – yachts, pleasure-boats, longshore-boats, everything that could float, down to little cockleshells 'with a handkerchief for a trysail', had taken visitors out to see the Fleet at Spithead at prices that would have sufficed to buy the boats outright. Around each man-of-war before it sailed there were swarms of sea-boats and luggers filled with seamen's wives, sweethearts and other relations bearing last packages and messages. The wonder was that there was only one potentially dangerous accident. This time the *Sprightly* with Napier's party on board did not avoid a collision, for as it left the side of the *Duke of Wellington* it struck and stove in one of the numerous boats still clustered around her which was filled with women who had just taken leave of her crew. Thanks, however, to the presence of mind of the flag-captain, who had instantly ordered the lower portholes to be opened as well as the ship's boats lowered, all the forty or fifty women who had been precipitated into the water were soon lifted or dragged to safety, more frightened than hurt.

The enthusiasm shown for this review was fully shared by the Queen, who wrote to her uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians, that she had

> 'just . . . returned from a splendid and never-to-be-forgotten sight – the sailing of our noble Fleet for the Baltic; the Navy and the Nation were particularly pleased at *my leading them out*, as they call it. . . . Gloriously they bore along, followed by the prayers and good wishes of all. You should read the account in yesterday's *Times* . . .'

This account was certainly a most fulsome one, covering two-and-a-half columns of close print and going into minute detail.

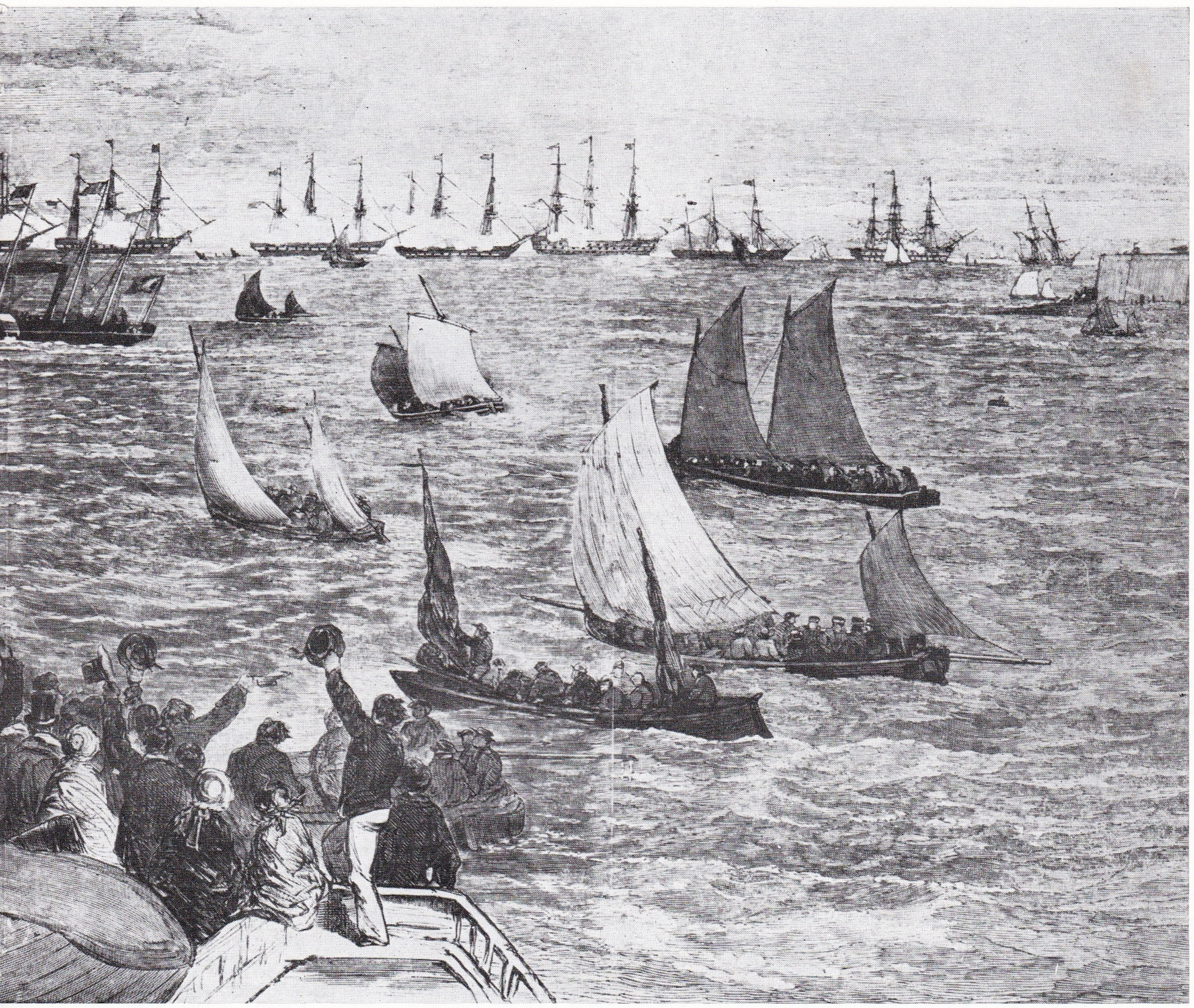
For the second division of the Fleet, under Corry, a powerful force was being got together, consisting of eleven of the line with twelve frigates, sloops and other smaller craft; but whereas none of the first division were dependent on sail alone, seven of the line-of-battleships of this and one frigate were in that position. It had been hoped that the whole squadron would be ready to leave port after being reviewed by the Queen on 16 March, the day before she intended to return to London, but only six ships were even at Spithead by then, and of these only the *Neptune* and the *Bulldog* (6) were ready to weigh and did so. The Queen, again accompanied by her family and greeted with the same enthusiastic cheering, accordingly followed the *Neptune* in the *Fairy* as far out as the Nab and then returned to Osborne, crossing next day to the Clarence Yard jetty and travelling thence to London by special train.

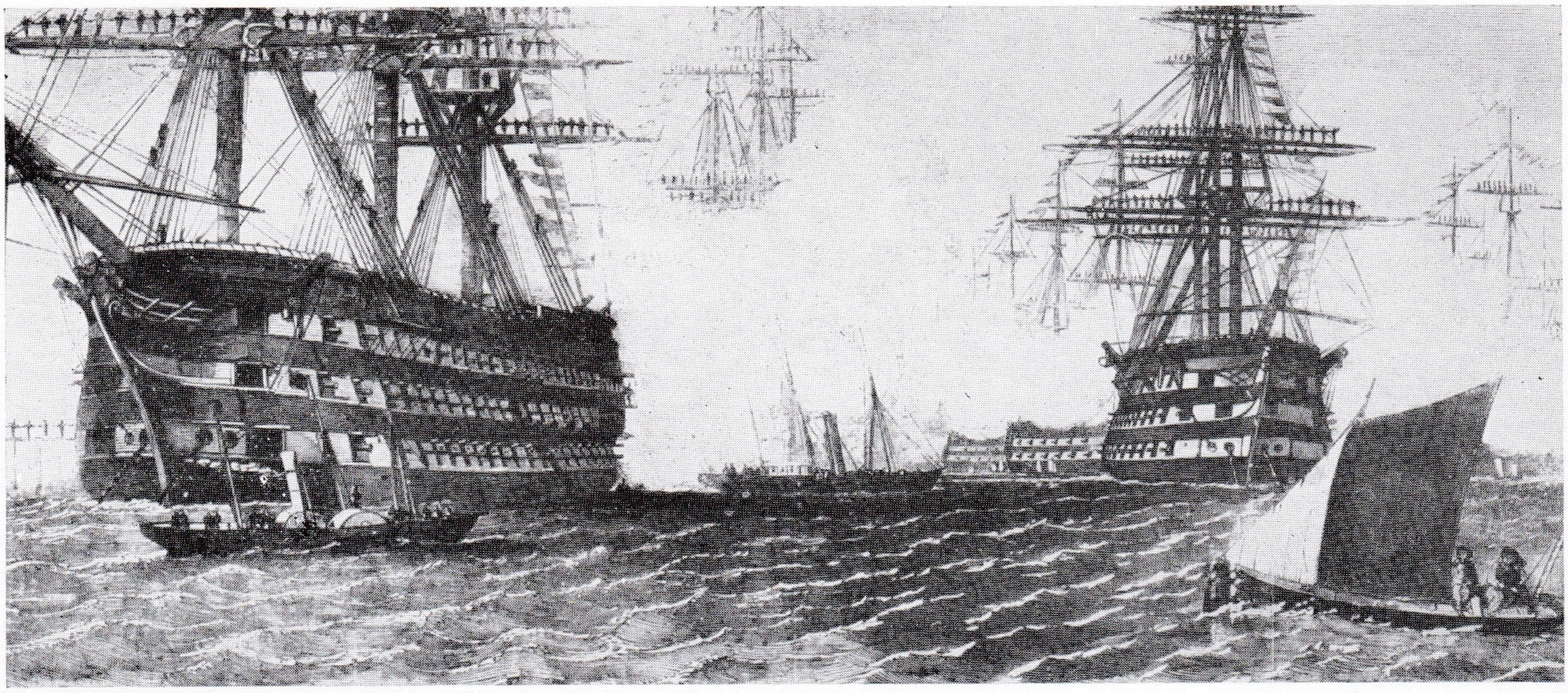
An account of this second and smaller review appeared in the *Hampshire Telegraph* of 18 March, which being a weekly paper coming out only on Saturdays had not reported the main review of the previous Saturday. After describing the royal salute fired by five of the six ships it added that the *Caesar* was 'unable to do so, not having her guns and ammunition on board', and went on:

> 'On Her Majesty leaving, the *Neptune* set all her starboard studding-sails and ran out to sea in splendid style. She soon left the *Bulldog* behind, although the latter had full steam on, and just before they were out of sight the *Neptune* was seen to heave to, to allow her consort to come up, which vessel then hoisted sail, and both pursued their voyage to join Sir Charles Napier's fleet.'

It was now the turn of the other Service again. On 3 April the 23rd Regiment (Royal Welch Fusiliers) was inspected on the Governor's Parade Field by its Colonel-in-Chief, Lieut-General Sir George D'Aguiler; and on the following day it marched out of Clarence Barracks with 34 officers, 950 other ranks and 14 women, the regimental goat leading the column, which was played out by the bands of the 42nd and 79th Highlanders and accompanied by 'a vast concourse' of hurrahing inhabitants. At Landport (later the Town) Station it entrained for Southampton and there embarked in the Royal Mail steamer *Trent* for the seat of war. Scarcely had it left Clarence Barracks than the 95th Regiment from Weedon in Northamptonshire marched in, only to leave again in its turn two days later in another Royal Mail steamer, the *Medway*, which had come over from Southampton on the previous night to embark it. The militia, too, were beginning to come into the picture, not only the Hampshire regiment but those of several other counties being embodied and brought into garrison to replace regular units as these went overseas. A problem, however, was that so many men enlisted locally from the militia into the line (150 from the Hampshires, 158 from the Wiltshire regiment, 170 from the Lancashires and over 200 from the South Middlesex, by December) that it was difficult to fill their places. Recruiting parties from the regulars hovered about the assemblies or parades of the militia, marking down likely-looking young fellows whom they afterwards flattered, declaring that they must have them in their corps before many days were over.

Her Majesty leaving Portsmouth to visit the Baltic Fleet.





Her Majesty, in the 'Fairy', passing through the fleet at Spithead.

Meanwhile towards the end of April Russian merchantmen began to be brought into the harbour as prizes, most of them picked up on homeward voyages before they had learnt that their country was at war. The first was the *Freia*, a 500-ton barque taken by the revenue cruiser *Argus* about 18 miles off Beachy Head and towed in past ramparts thronged by loudly cheering inhabitants to moorings off the Dockyard. A day or two later the *Argus* brought in the brig *Livonia*, while another revenue cutter, the *Mermaid*, came in with the barque *Vesta*, with a crew of Finns who were cheerfully contented to have been captured and so saved from probable impressment into the Russian forces.

Great expectations had been entertained of what the Baltic Fleet would achieve – the bombardment of the fortress of Kronstadt which guarded the then capital St. Petersburg (to-day called Leningrad), the capture of the Aland Islands commanding the Gulf of Finland, and so on. In contrast, less was expected from the reinforced fleet which had been despatched to the Black Sea from the Mediterranean. Even so, its lack of enterprise provoked criticism in a leader in the *Hampshire Telegraph* of 22 April, which also animadverted severely on the Army and the Government. Despite the name ultimately given to the war, it was not to the Crimea that the Anglo-French expeditionary force had originally been sent, but to the expected defence of Constantinople against a Russian thrust into the Balkans. For this purpose it proposed to disembark on the Gallipoli peninsula and fortify it. It was only when the Turks' stubborn defence of the Danubian Principalities further north (the core of the modern Rumania, which was the only part of the Balkans that the Russians had managed to occupy) had forced them to withdraw that the decision was taken to counter-attack at the beginning of autumn by a descent on the Crimean peninsula with the object of capturing Sebastopol, the base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Since in April the army was only just beginning to land at Gallipoli, the *Hampshire Telegraph* deprecated its slowness, which it ascribed in part to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Raglan, was not yet at his post but, as it put it, 'enjoying at his leisure the fêtes and pleasures of Paris', accompanied by the Queen's cousin the Duke of Cambridge, who was one of his divisional commanders. The official purpose of their undoubtedly rather prolonged visit was to concert measures and exchange compliments with the French higher command and Government; but this did not prevent Raglan (who as Lord Fitzroy Somerset had been the Duke of Wellington's military secretary, had lost an arm at Waterloo, and had been accustomed for most of his life to think of our new allies as the hereditary enemy) from forgetfully referring to the

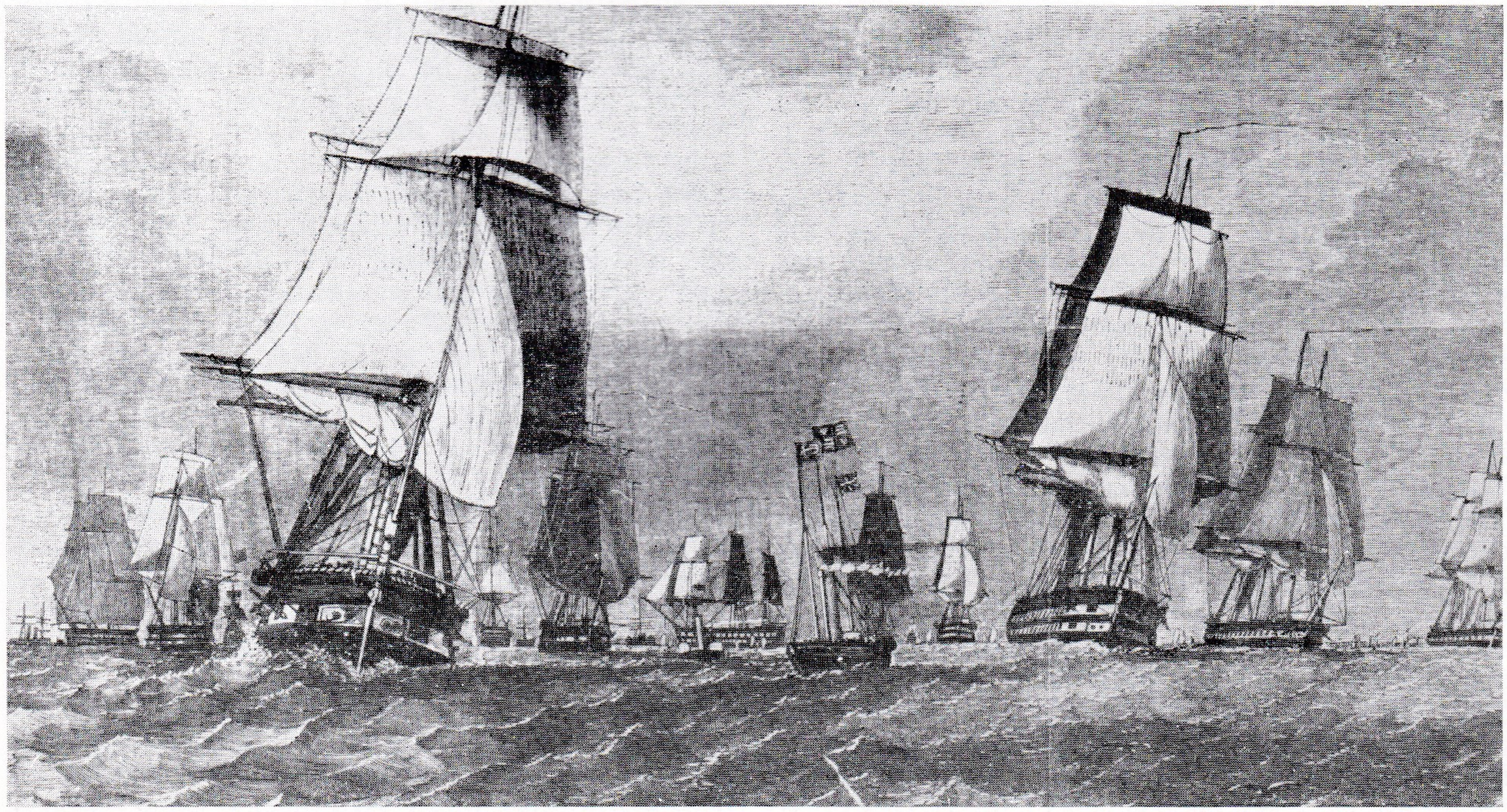
Russians as 'the French' on some occasions during his direction of the coming campaign. The Prime Minister, too, the hesitant, Godfearing and war-hating Lord Aberdeen, came in for a share of the *Telegraph's* criticism for what it called his want of will and willingness.

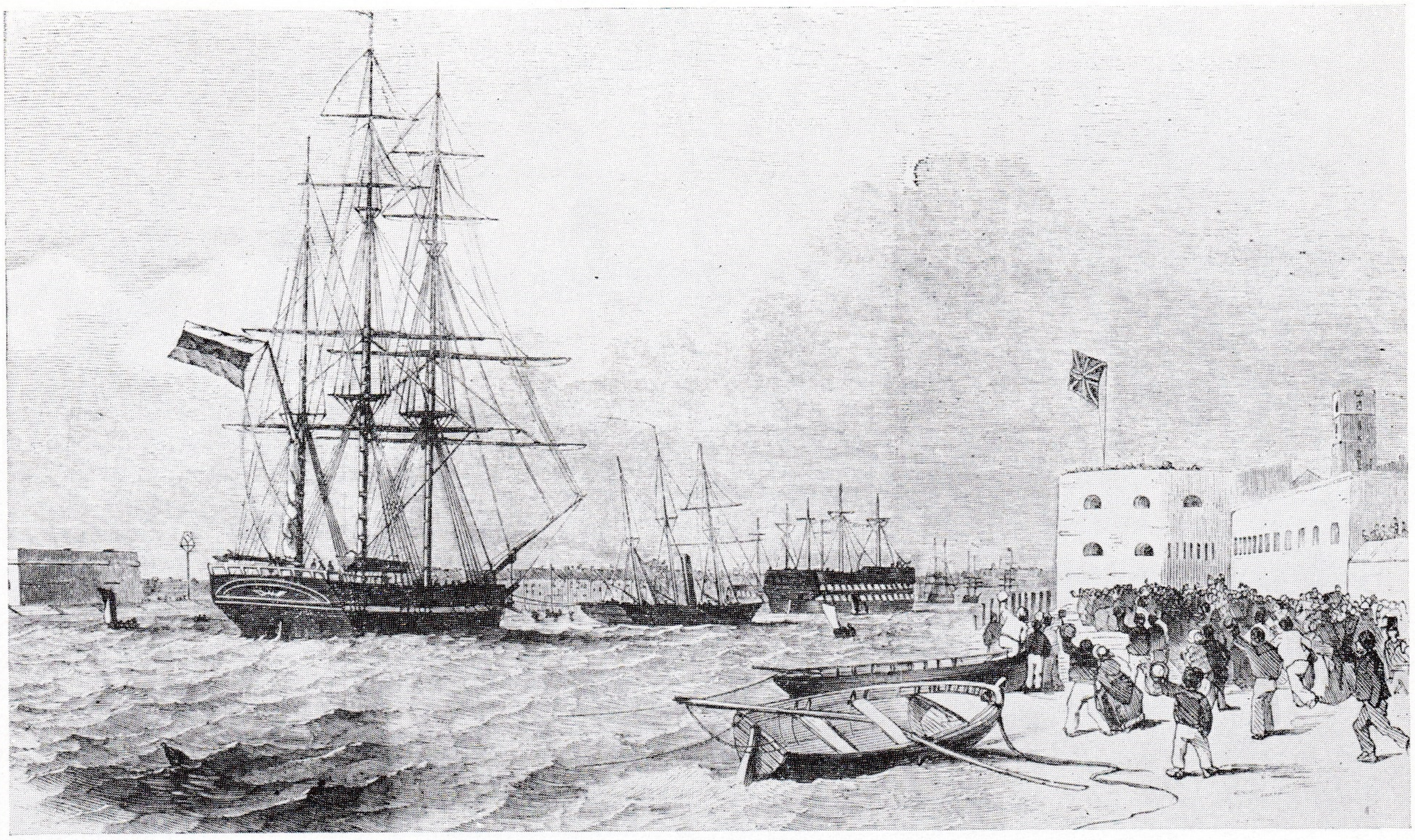
On 26 April the day of national humiliation and prayer which had been proclaimed and commended to the nation was observed in Portsmouth, whose places of worship were duly attended by large congregations which listened to appropriate sermons. A week later the Town Council rendered unto Caesar, in proper sequence, the things which were Caesar's by voting a patriotic address to the Queen.

At the end of May the Black Watch left for the war in their turn, and after that the embarkations were of collections of drafts for various units, rather than of single battalions. Thus a month later the *Vulcan* took out detachments of the Guards and the 79th, 93rd and 95th regiments; and in September 50 men for the 88th and 100 for the 97th were embarked, closely followed in another transport which was also carrying provisions by further drafts for the 79th and 88th, and then by artillerymen in a steam frigate. Throughout the summer and early autumn paddle-sloops and other small vessels left from time to time with ammunition, ships came in for repairs, and new or repaired vessels had their trials in the Solent before setting off for the seat of war. To meet the constant demand for provisions the victualling resources of the Dockyard were worked day and night, but still proved inadequate, and a private baking establishment in Southsea was called upon to supplement them by preparing a large quantity of biscuit for the Navy.

By July disappointment with the poverty of results had been extended to the Baltic Fleet, and the *Hampshire Telegraph*, reluctant as yet to turn its strictures upon it, was seeking to explain Napier's failure to achieve anything much by laying stress on the strength of the Russian defences. 'Portsmouth', it declared with much justice, 'is not so strong as Kronstadt'. But in August came a crumb of comfort in the shape of the capture of the minor fortress of Bomarsund in the Aland Islands by an amphibious operation. Greeted with enthusiasm in Portsmouth, this was hailed as an earnest of more successes to

The Baltic Fleet leaving Spithead.





The 'Argus' towing the first Russian prize into Portsmouth Harbour.

come. But they did not; as far as Kronstadt was concerned Napier came, saw, and went away again; and when the fleets returned home at the approach of winter *Punch* quipped wryly:

> 'What is the difference between the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet? Answer – The Baltic Fleet was expected to do everything and did nothing. The Black Sea Fleet was expected to do nothing and it did it'.

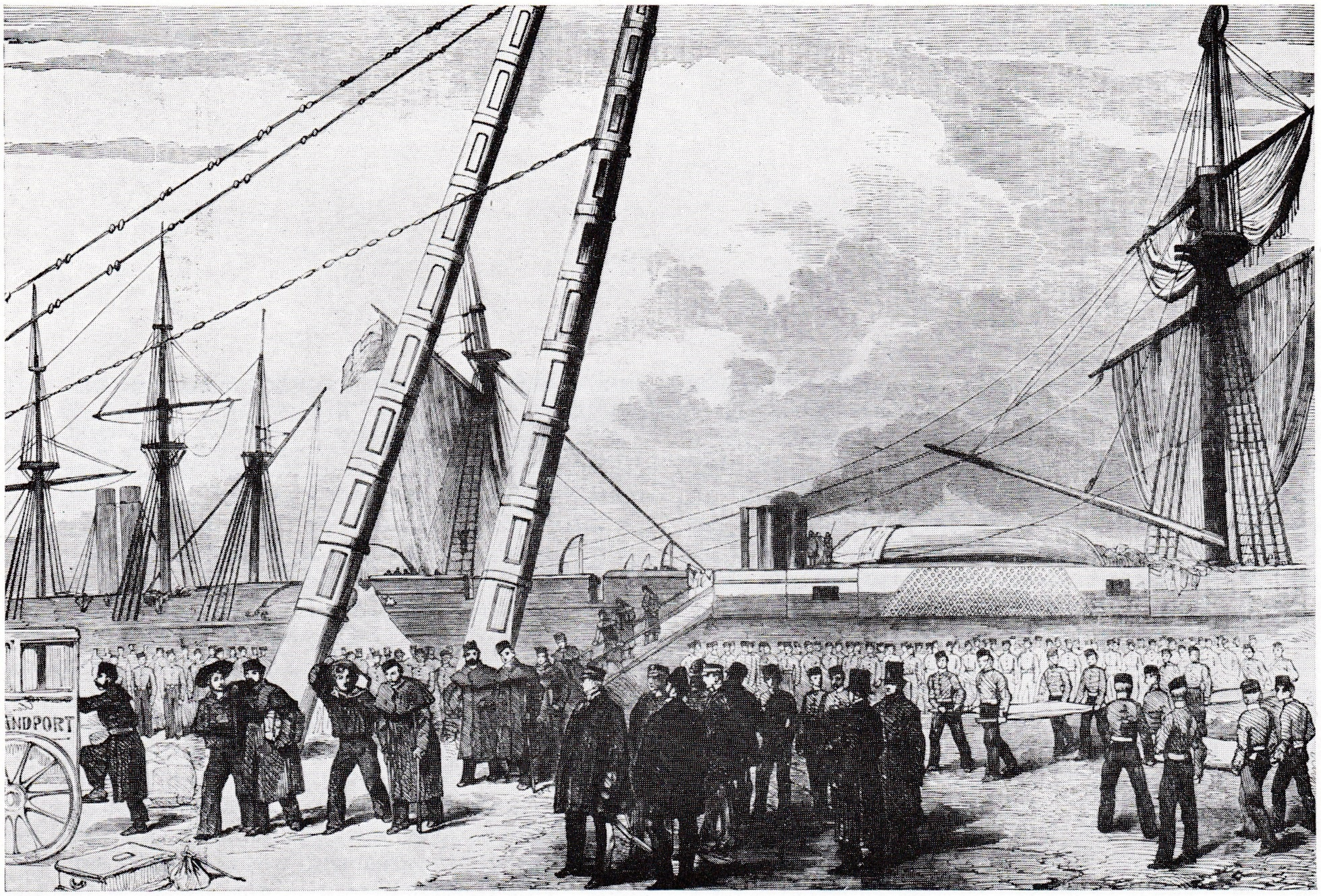
On land, however, much had latterly been happening. Into two months from the middle of September were packed the landing in the Crimea, the battle of the Alma, the formation of the siege of Sebastopol, and the battles of Balaklava and Inkerman. At last the bells rang and the people rejoiced, not yet realising that the glory belonged to the 'other ranks' and the regimental officers, and that the generals – with one exception – had contributed only muddle. The exception was a future Lieutenant-Governor of Portsmouth, Sir James Scarlett, who commanded the Heavy Brigade of cavalry at Balaklava. The suicidal charge of the Light Brigade at that ill-managed battle is known to many people; few now remember the brilliant rout by the 'Heavies' of a superior force of Russian cavalry. Scarlett's contribution to this was a compound of commonsense, courage, leadership and a knowledge of his own limitations. The Army, and above all the fashionable cavalry regiments, were suffering from a particularly lamentable result of the social snobbery of high-born and wealthy officers. When their regiments were ordered to India they exchanged out of them into others which were remaining at home, in order to continue to enjoy their sports and pleasures. When the regiments returned they often exchanged back into them and then ostracised and 'froze out' – or others of their kidney did – the socially more obscure but far more competent officers who meanwhile had proved themselves and learnt their profession the hard way against Mahrattas, Sikhs and Afghans. But Scarlett, who had seen no active service, had under him as aide de camp one such experienced officer, a Lieutenant Elliott, to whom he had the sense to turn for guidance in the supreme moment when they sat their horses side by side and watched the mass of Russian horsemen lumber prematurely into movement. On Elliott's advice he moved the Brigade slightly to a flank in order to secure a better position, and then asked him to tell him when to order the charge, after which he would do the rest. The moment came, Elliott gave a sign, and Scarlett, drawing his sword and roaring the order, galloped several lengths ahead of anyone else into the Russian mass, laying about him furiously. Elliott, following him at his best pace, went down with a dozen wounds from which he nevertheless survived; but the Brigadier bore a charmed life and the Brigade, despite all odds, steadily cut the Russians to pieces and drove them from the field.

The heavy losses that had been incurred in the frontal attack on the Alma Heights – losses that were really irreparable, since such men could hardly be replaced – naturally called for larger reinforcements. Late in October the screw steamship *Queen of the South* came from Southampton to take on board 800 men of various regiments, who came by train from London, Winchester and Walmer, and were met at the terminus by the bands of the Lancashire and Wiltshire Militias, who played them to the Dockyard.

A draft for the 95th was also brought by steam tug from Parkhurst Barracks in the Isle of Wight. A fortnight later a steam-transport embarked further detachments totalling 481 men, and a week after that another steamship, the *Royal Albert*, left with the first battalions of the Grenadier and Scots Fusilier Guards and a company of Sappers and Miners, while still other reinforcements were embarked in a steam frigate and a screw transport. On this occasion the Prince Consort came down from London by special train to witness the departure of the Guards, going out to Spithead in the *Fairy* to inspect the *Royal Albert*, named after him. By the end of November, it was computed, at least 20,000 men had been embarked from Portsmouth and Southampton. The only exception to the good order with which this was done occurred a few days afterwards at the departure of the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment. An advance party of 50 men under an officer who clearly was not remarkable either for commonsense or humanity, arrived from Chatham by train to prepare for the reception of their comrades in the Royal Mail steamer which was to carry them. Having left without breakfast and had nothing to eat all day, they had no sooner arrived in the Dockyard than they marched down to its gates in a body and tried to force their way out in order to get some sustenance. In this they were prevented for the time being by police and a picket of Middlesex Militia with fixed bayonets who were on guard at the gate; but they continued to refuse to obey their officer's order to return to the tug which was to convey them to their transport at Spithead, and the situation was beginning to look ugly when the Rev. D. Whinlam, a clergyman who had come down to take passage in the steamer, intervened. Reasoning with the men, he obtained and paid for a supply of bread and cheese and stout for them, and prevailed on them to obey orders – though five of the most insubordinate were taken to the Dockyard guardhouse.

In December also, General Simpson was appointed Chief of Staff to Lord Raglan and departed for the Crimea, being succeeded at Portsmouth by Major-General H. J. W. Bentinck. In June 1855 Raglan, whose health had steadily deteriorated and who had suffered intensely through the failure of the ill-conducted attacks on the Redan and Malakoff at Sebastapol (in the former of which many of the reinforcements recently drafted out through Portsmouth probably perished), died; and Simpson succeeded to the command. As a second-in-command in an Indian war he had been described by his C-in-C. as 'peculiarly exact in following his instructions', but as a G.O.C. of a large army he was one of the most colourless in modern British military history. In that capacity he presided – no stronger word is applicable – over the second and equally unsuccessful assault on the Redan and the capture of Sebastopol, or rather the occupation of the town made possible by the Russian withdrawal after the French had taken the Malakoff at their second attempt.

The sufferings of the British Army condemned to a winter campaign in the Crimea which had not originally been intended, for which no adequate provision of shelter and clothing had been made when it was first decided upon, and which could have been avoided or cut short if Raglan had pushed straight on into Sebastopol when the victory of the Alma had given him the chance, had been early revealed to the country by the war-correspondent William Russell; and by December an occasional ship was leaving Portsmouth laden with (apparently prefabricated) huts for the troops, for the supply of which the local firm of Camwell had become the chief contractors. A few days before Christmas, too, a transport which was taking out a draft for the Rifle Brigade also carried 39 bales of warm knitted jackets, though this was not only a relatively limited provision but was earmarked for the seamen and marines serving ashore. The grossly incompetent treatment of the sick and wounded, even – or perhaps especially – in the base hospital at Scutari, had likewise been made known; though, contrary to a popular impression, it was not this revelation which inspired the young Hampshire lady Florence Nightingale of Embley Hall near Romsey to enrol and take out a party of nurses. She had in fact arranged with the Secretary for War soon after the outbreak of hostilities that she would do so, and she reached Scutari on 4 November, less than a month after the Alma was fought and on the very day when the first eulogistic references to her appeared in the *Hampshire Telegraph*. But the public's awareness of the scandal and desire to know that things were being put right were reflected in the *Telegraph*'s account of the landing of wounded from the steam frigate *Retribution* on 24 January 1855. Admiral Cochrane himself was present on the jetty and 'nothing could exceed' the careful attention paid to the landing of the stretcher cases, the more urgent of whom were taken to the garrison hospital and the rest to a new auxiliary hospital which had been established near the Milldam. About fifty cases walked ashore, some carrying their scanty kits or little bundles, others helped by bluejackets to a waiting omnibus. Most were wrapped in their regimental dark grey great-



Landing the wounded from HMS 'Retribution', at Portsmouth.

coats, beneath which showed a variety of uniforms – here a hussar with red trousers and little forage-cap, who had no doubt ridden behind the egregious Lord Cardigan into the Valley of Death at Balaklava and survived; there a heavy cavalryman with untrimmed whiskers and a yellowed face, who on that same day had at least had the fortune to follow a better man.

By March fresh drafts of reinforcements for the army were on their way out from Portsmouth as from other ports; and late in that month one of the militia regiments in garrison, the South Lincolnshire, embarked for Corfu[1], where it would release regulars for more active service.

The Baltic Fleet, in contrast to the panache and glamour of its departure, had come home by driblets in December, and Napier had landed to a subdued welcome, afterwards declining the offer of a G.C.B. For the campaign of 1855 the command of it was transferred to a man sixteen years younger, Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Dundas; it was made up entirely of steam vessels; and its departure was somewhat less exuberant than before. From the various harbours and dockyards to which its ships had betaken themselves during the winter while such damage as they had suffered during the previous cruise was being repaired, they were gradually concentrated at Spithead during some weeks beforehand. Then when the weather seemed good enough an advanced or flying squadron was got ready. Again the Queen came down to see this leave. Following the same programme as in the previous year, she first passed through the Fleet in the *Fairy* on her way to spend the night of 19 March at Osborne. Prince Albert meanwhile took the opportunity to inspect, first the new royal yacht *Victoria and Albert*, which was lying in the Dockyard, and afterwards the Sailors' Home, where he spent half-an-hour, saw the men at mess, expressed his satisfaction with everything except the size of the establishment, and promised a donation of £300 from the Queen and himself towards its enlargement before rejoining her at Osborne. Then on the following afternoon the *Fairy* brought the royal pair back to Spithead, steamed slowly past each of the seven ships of the squadron to the accompaniment of the customary royal salute and cheering, led them to sea as far as the Nab, hoisted the farewell signal and returned to Osborne. 'The departure of this small instalment of the Baltic Fleet', it was recorded rather soberly, 'was watched by many thousands of spectators from the walls, piers, and the Isle of Wight and Southsea beaches.'

The departure of the main body was more subdued, though this was at least partly due to bad weather. Although the Queen did not come down again to see it off, many thousands arrived by excursion trains,

[1] The Ionian Islands were a British protectorate from 1815 to 1862, when in response to local desire they were united with Greece.

one of which carried 1700 people; and for several days before the intended date of sailing, 3 April, steamers belonging to the local companies and smaller craft of every description were incessantly moving about Spithead, giving sightseers a close view of the ships, with now and then a peep through the portholes. On the 2nd one of the smaller boats, laden with people and provisions from the Gosport side of the harbour, capsized in the heavy swell that was running, but all on board her were fished out safely by a couple of smartly handled boats from the warships, and even the provisions were rescued soon afterwards. By the 3rd, however, it was blowing a gale, and the order to sail was countermanded, much to the chagrin of the excursionists who were confronted by the alternatives of returning home or paying what was for those days the colossal sum of £3 for a bed in Portsmouth. Those who stayed did not even have the satisfaction of seeing the Fleet leave after all, for though the gale dropped the morning broke thick with fog and even at noon only spectre-like hulls could be dimly seen from the shore. At first it seemed possible that there would be another postponement, but at 1.10 p.m. the signal to prepare to weigh was made from the *Duke of Wellington*, followed at 1.30 by 'Weigh and form order of sailing as most convenient'. Few sightseeing vessels of any kind were moving about the Fleet, owing to the general impression that it would not leave that day, but a schooner-yacht managed to get under the bows of the *Majestic* (81), which carried away both its topmasts and was obliged to drop anchor. Not until about 3.30 did the mist suddenly lift, giving spectators on shore a glimpse of the Fleet in full sail between the Warner and the Nab. In the Queen's absence Port-Admiral Cochrane and the Board of Admiralty, who

The Military Hospital, Portsea.

had gone out to Spithead in the Board's steam-yacht *Vivid* about 6 a.m., accompanied it for some way. In sad contrast to the outgoing armament was the spectacle of the *Bellerophon* sail-of-the-line being towed into the harbour laden with sick and wounded from the Crimea; and something of an anti-climax was also provided four days later by the return of the flagship from the Downs in order to repair damage sustained by a collision with an American emigrant ship. Admiral Dundas, however, did not return in her, having shifted his flag to the *Nile* (91). In the months that followed his one notable achievement was a bombardment of the fortess of Sveaborg, near Helsingfors (the modern Helsinki) which did considerable damage. But if his campaign was thus a little more creditable than Napier's, he did no more against Kronstadt than the latter had.

The Queen was seen again in Portsmouth in early August, when she came down to preside over the launch of the battleship *Marlborough*, of 4000 tons. Again the weather was not propitious, consisting mainly of squalls and showers, but excursion trains and steamboats had once more brought thousands of sightseers, in addition to which the town and neighbourhood would have been pretty full in any case, since it was Goodwood Week. All the hotels were full, several members of the Board of Admiralty were staying at the George, and a handsome pavilion booth had been erected at the port side of the ship's stern for the accommodation of the Court on the launching day. The Queen, Prince Albert and the elder royal children arrived from Osborne in the *Fairy* shortly before noon, and were received with the usual honours and salutes by the ships at Spithead and in the harbour. On land, too, they were greeted with enthusiastic cheers by the assembled thousands, after which they were formally received by the authorities. The launch itself, however, was not a striking success. It began satisfactorily, but the vessel came to a dead stop with about 75 feet of it still on the slip, and in spite of the efforts of several powerful tugs was not got off it till the next morning.

All the occasions and spectacles to which the war had given rise at Portsmouth, however, even the first departures of the Baltic Fleet, were outshone by that which marked and celebrated its ending. Sebastopol had fallen in September 1855, after which no more important operations were carried out except a successful expedition against Kinburn, another Russian base on the Black Sea, in which an effective part was played by newly-devised ironclad floating batteries, in whose construction the French had led the way.

Scene in the Military Hospital, at Haslar.

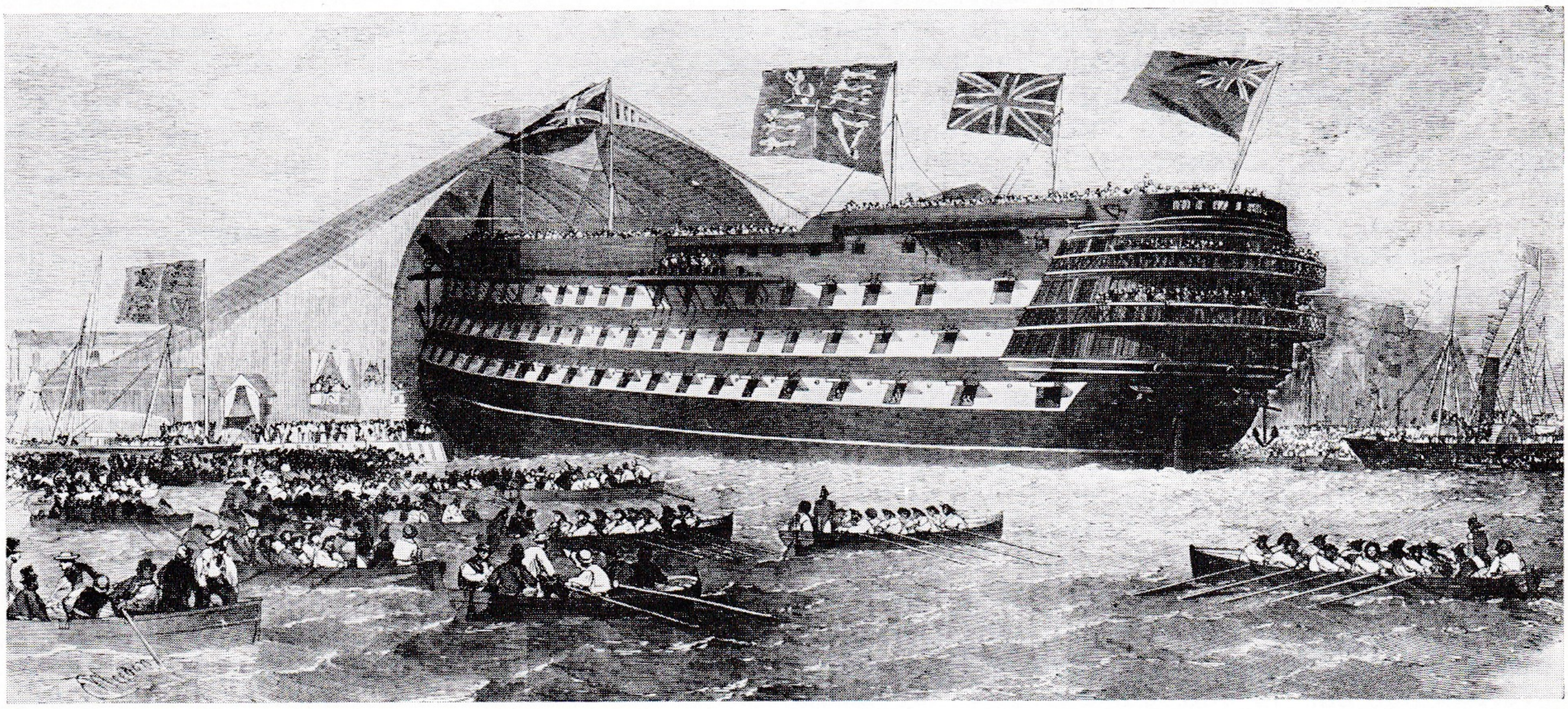
Diplomatic manoeuvres and peace negotiations occupied the next six months, and the Treaty of Paris was signed on 30 March 1856. In Britain considerable naval and military preparations had been made for another campaign which it was hoped would make up for the disappointing character of much of its predecessors; and perhaps one element in the tremendous enthusiasm that greeted the naval review and sham-fight by which the return to peace was celebrated at Portsmouth was a spirit of 'By Jingo, we'd have shown them something if we'd been allowed to go on!' Another element, of course, at any rate as far as many were concerned, was simply delight that the war was over.

'Never', exulted the *Illustrated London News*, 'have we been able, even at the outbreak of a war, to boast of a fleet as powerful' as that which after some days of preliminary evolutions anchored on Saturday 19 April in a double line from Lee Point to off the Nab, while scores of gunboats, mortar vessels and the new floating batteries crowded the outer fringes

of the waters off Ryde and Portsmouth, together with throngs of steamers and other craft carrying spectators. Visitors, numerous enough on that day, increased on Sunday, streaming down the streets, rushing to the piers and swarming aboard steamers which left the quays and jetties swaying alarmingly with their loads. Others who could not reach these steamers or were afraid to board them crowded the walls or spread over Southsea Common and Clarence Esplanade; while liberty-men from the Fleet, glad to be ashore in England once more, disported themselves in the taverns and packed the Hard and the neighbouring streets. On Monday they returned to their ships in varying states of jollity or oblivion. All over the town, walls were covered with the advertisements of vessels which were prepared to follow the Fleet's evolutions during the coming sham-fight at charges varying from ten shillings to four guineas per passenger. Houses were temporarily at the disposal of the highest bidder, and £50 was merely a modest charge for two nights' lodging for a family of three. All the rooms in the hotels and taverns had long since been taken, and every officer in the Fleet had invited far more friends than the ships could find room for on the great day. French officers also, in their glittering uniforms, cocked hats and aiguillettes, added a further dash of colour to the motley mass which was variegating the streets, while the troops held a field-day on Southsea Common.

On Tuesday, the day before the review, more trains brought more people, many of them at a loss to know where and how they were to spend the intervening night. As darkness fell, tired groups with carpet-bags could be seen wandering from street to street in a fruitless search for lodgings which even if they had been inhabitable would have been prohibitive in price. On the morrow masses of people of every class began early to throng the places from which the best view could be had, some of them having slept soundly, but others less comfortably on chairs and tables at ten shillings apiece, and many having never slept at all. Since a leading feature of the sham-fight was to be an attack on Southsea Castle from the sea, the neighbouring Common was soon black with people. Before eleven in the morning the town itself was deserted by all but the aged and infirm. Gosport Common, the beach between Fort Monckton and Stokes Bay, and the neighbourhood of Haslar all had their crowds of spectators, on foot or standing in carts and waggons, agog to see the sham assault which would also be made on Browndown and Monckton. Once more the Queen came by train, but now it was in the new royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* that she steamed out from the harbour, followed by

The 'Marlborough', immediately after the launch, at Portsmouth.



the ministers of various foreign countries in the *Vivid* and by the Board of Admiralty, the Port Admiral with the Governor, and members of both Houses of Parliament, all in their respective vessels; as well as by P. and O. and Royal Mail steamships and other craft with parties of fashionable visitors on board. Greeted first by the saluting battery and then by the guns of the fleet of 240 ships – the largest number ever assembled up to that time for a royal review – the *Victoria and Albert* sailed past the starboard line and then returned down the centre, bringing up at the end. The sham-fight followed, some disappointment being caused by the fact that the forts did not return the mock fire of the ships because at the last moment the Lieutenant-Governor had discovered that he himself would have to pay for every round fired. When this naval gunfire had finally died away the royal yacht returned to harbour, followed by the steamers; the Queen left again, 'the tumult and the shouting died, the captains and the kings departed'[1], and all the multitudes of spectators began to wander home, though in many cases probably not until they had watched the hundreds of rockets that were sent up by the ships in the fleet that evening to celebrate the occasion.

Perhaps the most permanent outcome of the Crimean War for Portsmouth, however, was one which came about in 1860. Though some had profited by it, the wives and families of the soldiers and sailors were very poorly provided for, since there were no family allowances for them in those days. The result was that they often required assistance from the Board of Guardians. In a garrison and naval town like Portsmouth this became a considerable expense and in the 1850's the rates in Portsea were 6s. in the pound. This led to much pressure in Parliament from the members for Portsmouth and other naval and garrison towns, in order to persuade the Government to make a contribution to their relief, as it was considered that the heavy expenditure to which these towns were put was due to the existence of naval and military bases in their midst on which no rates were paid. At last in 1860 the Government agreed to make a regular contribution to the poor rates provided that it assessed the value of its own property.

[1] Kipling's *Recessional*, written after a still greater review forty-one years later, on the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

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Copies of these publications are obtainable from the City Record Office, the City Central Library or the City Museums. A leaflet and order form outlining present and future publications may also be obtained from the City Record Office, Guildhall, Portsmouth.